



"Postscripts to the Jones/Voris Affair"

By [Randy Engel](#)

October 9, 2017



Randy Engel

Introduction

This is the third and final installment to my first two articles, "All the Men Behind the Opus Dei Curtain," and "On the First Anniversary of the Jones/Voris Affair – A Response to E. Michael Jones with Follow-Up Questions."

My thanks to the over 400 readers who responded via e-mails to the Opus Dei/Jones/Voris Affair, including many former Opus Dei members and cooperators.

In this last segment of the series, I'm including some important postscripts I received from readers in the U.S. and abroad. They included important comments and attachments primarily on Opus Dei and one on E. Michael Jones, the author of *The Man Behind the Curtain: Michael Voris and the Homosexual Vortex*.

I'll begin with the singular commentary on Dr. Jones sent to me by Catholic journalist, Rosemary Fielding. It is printed verbatim below in a separate font and needs no additional comments.

Rosemary Fielding on The Truth Behind the Quotation

In the April 20, 2017 letter of E. Michael Jones to Randy Engel (following Mike's request, Randy posted it in July of 2017), Mike refers to Bishop Bernard Fellay, superior general of the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). Mike quotes him as saying, "the church has cancer. We can't associate with the church because then we would get cancer." Jones gives no citation for this quotation. I think I know what Mike would cite as the source of Bishop Fellay's alleged quotation. If I am right in my identification of the source, however, this is not a quotation from Bishop Fellay, but a quotation fabricated by Mike Jones that would prove to be as false as a paraphrase or a summary as it is as a quotation.

In April 2009, on Palm Sunday, Bishop Fellay gave an interview from St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Winona, Minnesota, that was broadcast by Gloria T.V. in which was included a discussion of the then-recent controversy around Bishop Williamson and the SSPX's relationship with the Vatican. For reasons I will explain later, I believe this broadcast is the source that Mike has failed to cite in his letter to Randy. Because the exact words, as well as the context, are important, below is a transcript of that part of Bishop Fellay's interview that Mike (I believe) reduced to two simple sentences. All the quotation is from Bishop Fellay. The cancer-analogy is in bold.

"The Church for once [i.e. for the first time] is not only attacked from the outside, like persecutions, but you have insiders, inside attacks. St. Pius X has already said, 'The enemy is within'..... ideas which may have

confusedly spread within the Church... The Church is suffering heavy, heavy diseases. It is not only we who are saying that. You have the popes [Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI]... They all say that the Church is sick. Well, Paul VI, he said, he spoke of 'auto-demolition'... He used the words 'smoke of Satan' within the temple of God. ... John Paul II, he spoke of heresies which are spread *with full hands*, and he spoke of happenings within the Church. So that means that even the present popes, they do acknowledge from time to time that there is a very, very serious crisis in the Church.

Let me compare it to a cancer, and even to a generalized cancer, that means a disease which is spread in the whole body. Now if you have someone who has a cancer, you fight the whole *cancer*, you disagree with the *cancer*, so you are strongly against the *cancer*, but this does not mean that you are going to be against *the person* who has the cancer. Easily, you will make like a coincidence with both, you will say the one is the other, but that is a simplification. As when we say 'the modern Church...the conciliar Church and... the official Church' – it is an easy way to deal with the problem, it is not very easy to say where is the cancer ..when it is generalized...when you have metastasis...it is everywhere. So it is a simplification... to say the whole Church is the cancer. But, precisely, very precisely, it is wrong. If you say so, then you would have a serious problem in saying where is the *holy* Church. If you just say that the whole Church is sick...is the sickness, then the holiness is gone. And we have to maintain that the Church is the visible body. Even if we see a great part of this visible Church gone wrong, we do not have the right to say that the whole thing is gone. Because if you say so, well, there is no Church. Then we have to make ourselves *sedevacantists*. So there is a tendency, there is a danger, to just throw the whole thing,..the baby with the water, and it is linked with the terrible situation; which we are in, which has taken great, great parts of the Church. It is very difficult to make that distinction; it is very easy to say I'll have nothing to do with them [the conciliar Church]... **So when we [the SSPX] deal with having relation with them, we don't want to have any kind of relation with *the cancer*. Of course, if you have relation with cancer, you may receive the cancer. It is a bad example, but it is just to say, 'No, we want to deal with the *holy* Catholic Church which is still existing, under or below this appearance of disease'**...Sometimes the distinction could appear subtle. And I do agree that such relations are *not* without danger. It is not an easy situation. But if we do want ...expect...the Church to overcome these diseases, we are bound to do what we can, at our place, according to our means, to help. And if by talking we can remind some people in the Church of the right positions, of what the Church taught before, we have to do it, with great prudence, of course...The only thing we want is that the Church get out of the crisis and be what the Church has to be, this beautiful spouse of Christ to whom Our Lord has entrusted His mission, which is to save souls, to bring them to heaven. That is why we deal with it, because we believe that it is the holy Church, we believe that we have a duty now. We also know that it is limited, we are not going to pretend that we are going to save the Church. We try to do what we can at our place, remembering that little things can, in the hands of God, bring much more than it appears...The miracle – that is in God's hands, not ours."

My husband and I saw his point. How could anyone who actually listened to it with an honest mind fail to see his point? It was clear that Bishop Fellay believed the cancer is the doctrinal errors in the Church, and not the Church itself. In addition, Bishop Fellay was actually defending the SSPX's decision *to participate in talks with the Vatican*; the interviewer had asked Bishop Fellay what he would say to the critics of this decision to enter into talks with Rome. In other words, bishop Fellay was explaining the reason why the Society *was associating* with the Vatican / Church. The true meaning of Bishop Fellay's interview, then, taken in context, is *almost the reverse* of Mike's summary of his interview, which summary Mike later put into quotation marks in *CW*, as I will explain below.

I believe that this interview is the source of Mike's quotation because my husband and I were the ones who showed Mike this interview when he and his wife visited our home in March 2010. During that visit, we suggested to Mike that he may think better of the SSPX if he would listen to Bishop Fellay's 2009 interview on Gloria T.V. We thought that Bishop Fellay sounded reasonable and just in his remarks to the point that even Mike Jones might see the reasonableness and justice of the SSPX's position. So we set him up with

our computer to watch it (he watched part of it, not all of it) and then went back to continue our visit with his wife. We heard exclamations from the other room that made us realize Mike was *not* happy with the interview. When he came out complaining about what Bishop Fellay said, I thought even at the time that Mike had misrepresented the content of Bishop Fellay's remarks to a stunning degree, and I said with some exasperation, "That's not what he said!" My husband also briefly expressed his disagreement, but being that it was a friendly visit, we let it drop.

However, the real shock came when we read *Culture Wars* in September 2010. "Bishop Fellay," Mike wrote, "one of the four bishops, had been interviewed at the SSPX seminary in Winona, Minnesota and the interview had been posted on YouTube. Fellay began the interview by throwing Williamson under the bus, and it went downhill from there. '*The Church has cancer, Bishop Fellay opined, and if we embrace the Church we'll get cancer.*'" (My italics.)

I was so shocked when I read an obviously ersatz quotation that I listened to the interview again and, at the same time, transcribed some of the interview in the margin of the article in *Culture Wars*. In the *Culture Wars* article Mike Jones had not only misquoted Bishop Fellay but had clearly changed the meaning of his carefully presented idea. I was shocked because I would not have thought Mike Jones would go so far as to make up quotations and publish them in his magazine just to make his point. But that is the conclusion I had to come to. It was a sorry conclusion to come to, because, in my mind, this meant that all his previous published work was put under a cloud of doubt. It is also worth noting that the quotation printed in 2010 is different from the quotation printed in the 2017 response to Randy.

It is this same interview that I believe is the source of Mike's quotation in the April letter that he asked Randy to publish. If it is the source, then he is misquoting Bishop Fellay again. And there should be no "if" in this kind of journalism.

I guess a little history might be of interest: I had been a subscriber to *Fidelity* since around 1993 or so; a contributor of several articles since 2001; and even had a book review I had written of Mike's *Libido Dominandi* published in *Our Sunday Visitor* in November 2000, a fact which Mike had considered a small miracle. We had purchased and read all his books up to that time. He and his wife and their children had stayed at our house in Pittsburgh several times (it was halfway between South Bend and Philadelphia), and our family had visited them as well in South Bend. During 2008-2009 our family had attended an SSPX chapel, but at the time of the Jones' stopover, we were going to the Latin Mass at an *Ecclesia Dei* Latin Mass Community church. However, we still admired Bishop Fellay and still believed the SSPX had made a largely correct analysis of the condition of the modern Church. Because of our admiration for Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, we had in the past discussed with Mike the situation of the SSPX – always ending in disagreement. I would also add that I knew nothing about the Voris/Jones explosion until this month because we no longer subscribe to Mike's magazine, nor do we watch Michael Voris. I only found Randy's article because, having read that Iran was cracking down on Christians more forcefully, I had done an Internet search to check out what Mike was currently saying about this country. The search brought up the Voris/Jones news. Finally – one of those historical footnotes – one of the articles I wrote for *Culture Wars* was a review of Randy Engel's book *The Rite of Sodomy: Homosexuality and the Roman Catholic Church*.

Our friendship with the Joneses faded to nothing after that visit. We haven't seen them since; nor were there any friendly phone calls, cards or other forms of communication; in fact, all indications were that they had decided to drop us. (And, yes, we did make some initiatives to stay in touch; Mike responded to one this year, and we shared a brief email exchange and trade of family news.) We often wondered if we became *persona non grata* because we also said to Mike on that visit that we thought the late Michael Davies won the debate with him, the debate on the excommunication of Msg. Lefebvre.

After that particular visit, my husband and I concluded that Mike was never going to change his mind about

what he had once published about the SSPX, no matter what happened, and no matter what he heard or read – and we concluded this not because Mike disagreed with Bishop Fellay, but because we thought he had seemed so unreasonable in his disagreement and he had inaccurately paraphrased what Bishop Fellay had said. And, so far, it appears that we were right about that prediction. I guess if Michael Davies couldn't do it, no one can.

Back to the matter at hand – I thought about writing Mike in September 2010 to point out the mis-quotation published in *CW*, but, in the end, for a couple of reasons, (not the least of which is that I did not want to transcribe the section of the interview – a time-consuming job without the right equipment) I thought that it best to leave it to the SSPX to correct it – which I certainly expected someone in that organization to do. But, no one seemed to have done so. We received *CW* for a few more years after that, and I never saw a correction or a letter to the editor pointing out the actual words of Bishop Fellay.

But now Mike is doing it again. And this time, because of the whole context of Randy's article on Opus Dei, Jones and Voris, I think it is pertinent to point out that Mike is not quoting Bishop Fellay if he is quoting the same interview of April 2009. And if Mike is not quoting that interview, he should tell us which one he is quoting. As I have told my students so many times, "You need a citation here."

I gave those instructions almost as often as I corrected with "Only exact words go into quotation marks." Obviously, I am making the point that a journalist of Mike's brilliance and experience knows that the same rules apply to him as apply to every other reputable journalist. So what gives with his work? Rosemary Fielding

Note: I transcribed this interview by going to this URL address on July 24, 2017:

<https://gloria.tv/video/9Z6S1nkPivGB1zyzsr6mxmNW6>

No Money for Burial of Opus Dei Members?

On the afternoon of September 13, 2016, a tragic head-on accident in Mexico between a Mercedes Benz Sprinter van, a crane and a truck claimed the lives of eleven members of Opus Dei including two female numeraries and nine numerary assistants as well as the driver of the van. The women were returning from an annual pilgrimage to the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan de Los Lagos in the State of Jalisco, one of the most important Marian shrines in Mexico.

Bishop-Prelate Javier Echevarría Rodríguez sent a letter of condolence from Rome in which he offered support and asked for prayers for the deceased and their families. The letter read in part:

I have to tell you that, in the face of so much sorrow, I don't know how to begin. But I want to accept God's will; may each word, each letter of what I am writing be a suffrage with the whole Work for the eternal rest of these beloved daughters. I ask the Blessed Trinity to grant them a very rich Heaven, and we will not forget to remember them each day.

On September 15, a Novus Ordo Mass of Christian Burial was conducted by Msgr. Francisco Ugarte, Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Mexico at the Church of S. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer in Guadalajara for the deceased Opus Dei daughters. In his homily, Msgr. Ugarte stated that "Opus Dei is a family that never separates," and went on to quote another section of Bishop Echevarría's letter:

When I first read the names, and even now, my eyes filled with tears. This isn't being sentimental, but rather the reality that we are a wonderful family, closely united, and therefore this painful happening is so difficult to

accept. I don't want to speak any more about the accident, but rather to dwell on their souls, so that also now they may sense that we are never separated, and this tragic event may lead us to strengthen the fraternity we need to live.

Shortly after the accident, two public announcements appeared asking for donations to help cover the burial expenses of the Opus Dei women killed in the accident – one account was set up at the Banco de Santander, Opus Dei's largest financial institution and a second at a GoFundMe Website (<https://www.gofundme.com/ayudafao>) .

The reader may recall that in Part I of this series, "All the Men Behind the Opus Dei Curtain," I explained the nature and obligations of Opus Dei numeraries and numerary assistants.

Both groups are linked to the Prelature of Opus Dei by simple agreement, but they are also required to make private, personal vows which are between them and God. Unlike religious orders where candidates take **public** vows and are taken care of by the order, Opus Dei has no legal or Canonical responsibility for the numerary or numerary assistant.

The former, both men and women, live in Opus Dei residences. They are celibate, have professional careers and turn over their salaries to the Prelature. The latter group, the numerary assistants, are generally Spanish-speaking servants and maids. They also make a pledge of celibacy and receive clothing, food and shelter at an Opus Dei facility. They rarely see their paychecks as money is first taken out for their upkeep. Female numeraries shop at high-end fashion boutiques and their poorer counterparts are taken by a numerary to shop at second-hand shops or places like K-Mart.

So here we have professional and housekeeping daughters of Opus Dei who have turned over their salaries for their lifetime in Opus Dei, and yet the multi-billion dollar, multi-national conglomerate cannot cough up enough bucks to bury their dead. What kind of a "family" **is** this? What kind of a family **does** this?

I am not the only one to ask these same questions. Here is a rough translation of a portion of comments made by an anonymous former Opus Dei numerary that appeared on the Correspondence website of www.Opuslibros.org on Friday, September 16, 2016. Under the title, "How dare you say: A splendid family and very united," Mediterranean paints a different picture of the Opus Dei "family" as described above by Bishop Echevarría:

... How dare you say: A splendid family and very united!

... A family with more sick members than healthy. A family that ignores the excruciating pain of many of its members; a family that binds its members and deprives them of any personal freedom; a family where the secret to remain is slavery; a family with a high number of suicides...

So, I ask again. What kind of a family is Opus Dei?

I hope that Opus Dei priests, numeraries, supernumeraries, and cooperators who are reading this column will ask themselves this question. I know they are reading this column because two different sources have reported to me that Opus Dei confessors are telling their penitents that I am an unreliable reporter based on E. Michael Jones' statement that the Ferndale affair highlighted in Part II of this series was a "fabrication." Why then hasn't the Archdiocese of Detroit or Opus Dei disavowed my account publicly? An honest question! And honest questions may yet be the death of the Prelature of Opus Dei.

Opus Dei's Narnia Clubs – A Fatal Deception

I first learned about Opus Dei's Narnia Clubs from my dear friend Marge Garvey of New York City, wife of Joseph Garvey, the author of the 58-page booklet *Parents' Guide to Opus Dei*, published in 1989 by Our Lady & St. Joseph in Search of the Lost Child – An Ad Hoc Alliance to Defend the 4th Commandment.

While Opus Dei continues to feed off its "pro-family" reputation based largely on the Prelature's creation and promotion of John Paul II Marriage and Family Institutes, the reality is that it's systemic cultic practices using deception, manipulation, and mind control are destructive of not only its members, especially its numeraries, but also the families from which Opus Dei members are drawn (and spiritually quartered).

As noted in the *Parent Guide*, "Opus Dei members are trained in a recruiting technique called "the path of friendship and/or "friendship and confidence." Major recruitment centers include Opus Dei residences, hostels, catering colleges, Opus Dei parishes and private schools, Catholic and secular elite universities such as Notre Dame, Harvard and Yale, and cultural and catechetical centers for children and teens, as well as Vatican-endorsed events such as World Youth Day.

The New York-based Narnia Catechetical and Cultural Center, aka, Narnia Clubs, is located at 163 East 81st Street. The red-brick cooperative represents a prime piece of real estate on the Upper East Side where apartments, and offices and penthouses sell for \$1 to \$3 million and rent monthly for \$3,000 to 5,000 and upwards to \$24,000.

The Narnia Clubs bills itself as "A personal approach to teaching the Catholic faith in the heart of Manhattan." The Center was founded by Mrs. Mickie Teetor in 1981. She is credited with the idea of teaching Catholic children the faith in an atrium or home setting using the techniques developed by Sophia Cavalletti and her Montessori collaborator, Gianna Gobbi in Rome in the mid-1950s.

The database *Buzzfile* indicates that the Narnia Clubs is a religious organization which has been located at its current location for 15 years and has an estimated annual revenue of \$110,000.

The following information was taken from the official website of Narnia Clubs at www.narniaclubs.org.

The Atrium Program [\$500] enrolls children ages 3 to 5. Classes are held on a weekly basis at the Narnia Office. Teachers use the Montessori method in a prepared environment to introduce each child to the basics of the Christian faith according to his or her individual needs and curiosity.

Program for Penance and Holy Communion Year One [\$645] **Year Two** [\$745] prepares children ages 6 to 7 for the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. Topics include "human persons made in the image of God, the life and presence of Jesus, the importance of prayer, distinguishing right from wrong."

Third, Fourth and Fifth Grade Religious Education [\$645] Topics include the Corporal Works of Mercy and God's plan of salvation from the Incarnation to Pentecost; Exploring and comparing the Old and New Testament; and the Creed and saints.

Program for Confirmation Year One [\$645] **Year Two** [\$745] prepares Narnia students for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

The [Socractic Circle](#) [\$150] Those in grades eight and above who have completed Confirmation are "invited" to join the [Socractic Circle](#). Its stated purpose is to "To encourage critical thinking through scholarship. With an aim to foster the habit of discernment, the students and leader will examine various sources and viewpoints on the topics being discussed. The program will contemplate, among other topics, the relationship between faith and reason, freedom and human passions, the distinction between science

and technology, the nature of work, leisure, and culture, as well as the role of ethics and conscience in human acts." [Note: A Socratic circle is a form of "values -clarification." In a catechetical setting, student understanding of a particular text or doctrine is arrived at by dialogue and the use of the dialectic. Instead of the student being the active recipient of revealed truths of the Catholic faith and Catholic doctrine, he is told by the group facilitator to suspend assumptions and biases and that there is no right or wrong answer or approach to the question or problem set before him. Instead of accepting revealed truth the student is encouraged to question revealed truths and discover his own truth.]

Regarding the intellectual caliber of its students and teaching staff, the website exudes snob appeal:

... we recognize that these children are often precocious and require a religious curriculum that is at least as challenging as that offered by their schools.

As they come to understand their catechism, these children need a sense of deeper Catholic values to cope with the intense secular pressures of New York City life. An emphasis on personal moral and spiritual development is crucial, as many of these children may be leaders in the next generation.

Our volunteer teachers are dynamic, successful, busy people from various walks of life, including bankers, professional writers, educators, as well as mothers and fathers of our own children. Our teachers are well-informed and generous with their time because they care deeply for our children and the mission of the Church.

If the reader's brain has been automatically acting as a cash register, he will note that the total basic cost per child for his Narnia religious education ranges between \$4,715 to \$7,000. Yet the Narnia Catechetical and Cultural Center insists it's a "charity:"

Financing: The Narnia program relies on contributions in order to continue its mission. Mindful of the expenses to families, we try to keep tuition as low as possible. Unfortunately, tuition revenues do not cover all of our costs. Like any charitable organization, we rely on donations large and small. Please do consider making a tax-deductible gift by visiting the Donate tab.

Today, the Narnia Clubs enrolls more 250 children, ages 3 through 17, in its various classes and programs.

The Narnia Catechetical and Cultural Center states it "operates under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New York and is in compliance with Archdiocesan guidelines."

A Conversation with the Catechetical Office

The New York Archdiocesan Catechetical Office coordinates Catholic religious education on the parish level for children of all ages from pre-school through grade 6, adolescents from grades 7 to 12, and children with special needs. Leadership, policy development, training and support for this vast network is provided by the Central Office in Manhattan; Regional Catechetical Offices located throughout the Archdiocese; Parish Directors and Coordinators of Religious Education; and trained catechists at the parish level. The Director of the Central Catechetical Office which "oversees total religious education in all parishes" is Sr. Joan Curtain, CND.

On Wednesday afternoon, September 13, 2017, I had the pleasure of speaking with Sr. Curtain from her First Avenue office. She was accompanied by Sister Nancy Elizabeth Doran, SSC, the Liaison for Catechist Formation and Regional Director for Manhattan.

Prior to our conversation, I sent Sr. Curtain an e-mail asking for information on the Narnia Clubs operating in Manhattan. Specifically, I wanted to know what was the nature of the relationship, if any, between the Narnia Clubs and the Archdiocese of New York. I also asked if Narnia candidates for First Confession and First Communion, and Confirmation received the Sacraments through their own parishes; and if Narnia volunteer/teachers receive any training from the Archdiocese; and if the Archdiocese sponsored the Narnia Clubs' annual day of retreat?

I believe that both religious spoke truthfully when they explained that they knew of the existence of the Narnia Clubs, but contact with the group over the 15 years of its existence had been limited to just a few meetings, although it was the sisters' hope that communication would be expanded in the future. Their office, however, played no role in the training of Narnia instructors, and no role in the development of Narnia programs and policies including retreats. One of the sisters did inform me that the Narnia candidates received the Sacraments at St. Thomas More Parish in Manhattan.

I asked the sisters if they did not think it odd, that the Narnia Clubs operated outside the oversight of the Archdiocese, but that did not appear to engender any verbal reaction one way or the other.

That's when I asked them if they were aware that the Narnia Clubs is an Opus Dei "apostolate." Both sisters reacted with great surprise and said no. Thus, while the head administrator of the Archdiocese Catechetical Office of New York had some limited knowledge of the Narnia Clubs, neither she or her assistant, Sr. Dolan, were ever informed by the Narnia Clubs that it was an Opus Dei apostolate.

At this point the conversation switched over to a discussion of why the Archdiocese of New York in general, and the Catechetical Office in particular, should be concerned about Opus Dei's control of Narnia Clubs and the implication for parents who have children enrolled in the Narnia programs.

I explained that as the Catholic Church's only "personal prelature," Opus Dei is a kind of "universal, floating diocese," which can establish "apostolates" like the Narnia Clubs without publicly identifying itself as an Opus Dei entity.

Readers of this series are already aware of the Ferndale scandal in the Archdiocese of Detroit as described in Parts I and II of this series.

I noted that one of the most serious objections to Opus Dei's cultic behaviors and early recruitment practices was its violation of the Fourth Commandment – Honor thy father and thy mother, and I promised to send the Catechetical Office a copy of the *Parents' Guide to Opus Dei* from which the following examples of the Prelature's deceptive practices and attacks on the family are taken:

It [the Opus Dei movement] takes over the parental role in the lives of children very early, and very gradually, and in an undercover kind of way... this is certainly nefarious. Now there may be parents who get involved in it themselves... who don't feel this is the case. But for parents who don't get involved in it themselves and buy the whole thing, it [Opus Dei] will eventually come between them and their children. [Statement of Canadian parish priest, Fr. Jim MacDonald, whose nephews were surreptitiously recruited by Opus Dei.]

Under the persuasive influence of "get-togethers" and "circles," recruits (as young as twelve) are gradually encouraged to unfold their private and personal lives for "fraternal correction" and "formation."

From the very beginning, recruits are culled from their families into peer groups for their weekly "circles"; elementary school students, high school students, etc. ... Isolating them further one by one within these carefully circumscribed "circles," the "spiritual director" (a lay numerary) indoctrinates the younger recruits in

four ways: first, by winning their confidence; second, by projecting a highly attractive image of Opus Dei...; third, by establishing regular spiritual direction and confession with an Opus Dei priest; and fourth, by directing the adoption of the all-important "plan of life. ..."

Although Canon law forbids admitting anyone younger than eighteen, Opus has a way around that: the category *aspirant*. ... From the Opus point of view, expressing a desire to join thereby can make juveniles as young as twelve secret members of the Work, with no notification necessary to the competent authorities, their parents.

An example of biased (private) instruction (publicly denied) used to shape impressionable minds is the Opus Dei interpretation of the Finding of the Boy Jesus in the Temple. From a recruit's notes we read: "He [Jesus] allowed His parents to suffer [before announcing His mission]. "From then on, Jesus obeyed them, within limits. He allowed them to take care of Him, just as He allows us to take care of Him in the sanctuaries in the world." Finally, the underlined statement, **"When God enters the picture, parents' rights cease.** (emphasis added)."

In virtually every talk, homily, and exhortation to the members, "the Father" refers to them as "my children. ..." Inexorably, this helps to effect the radical transfer of normal family loyalties to the "new family" of Opus Dei. No natural family can compare with this family of the sainted monsignor. ...

The conversation with Sister Curtain and Sister Doran ended on a cordial note. I hope to engage them both in a follow-up call after this article is released.

For the record, I also contacted Jon Woods, the editor of *Catholic New York*, the largest diocesan newspaper in the nation, to find out if the paper had ever done a story on the Narnia Catechetical Clubs on the Upper East Side? He replied that he didn't think so. When I contacted the Archdiocesan Office of Youth Ministry asking the same question, the respondent told me she didn't know about the Narnia Clubs, but she would try and find out.

Also, although the Archdiocesan website under the title "The Council of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities of the Archdiocese of New York" listed a number of familiar groups including Communion & Liberation, Cursillo Movement, Focolare, Neocatechumenal Way and Regnum Christi NY [Legion of Christ], Opus Dei was not listed. According to Director Fr. Brian E. McWeeney, the reason for their omission is very simple. The Prelature has never asked. They would be welcome, of course," he said.

Narnia Clubs Refusal to Answer Questions

On September 14, 2017, one day after my conversation with Sr. Curtain and Sister Doran, I e-mailed Miss Nivi Toth, the Narnia Clubs' Program Director. I explained I was doing a story on the charity, had reviewed their official website, but still had some unanswered questions. I asked if she would prefer to answer them by phone or communicate by e-mail.

A few minutes later, I received a reply from the Assistant Program Director, Allison Baughman. According to her LinkedIn profile she is a graduate of Ave Maria University, a self-employed free-lance writer and a volunteer teacher at the Narnia Club. Miss Baughman stated she wanted more information "before we answer any questions." A rather curt response for a non-profit religious charity, I thought.

In my second e-mail, I explained I was doing a story on Narnia Clubs and how they operate and that my questions were open and straight forward, for example, "Are you a 501 (c) (3) charity"

The next day I received the following reply: "Dear Randy, you are correct, we are a 501 (c) (3) in good standing with the IRS and the Archdiocese of New York. We would prefer not to do an interview."

In my final follow-up message to Miss Baughman I noted that I was not seeking an interview, but merely asking some basic questions that any tax-exempt, tax-deductible public charity should be willing to answer regardless of the questioner.

I asked her under what title the charity was registered with the IRS since I could not find any reference to the Narnia Catechetical and Cultural Center, Narnia Club, or Narnia Clubs on Guidestar which maintains a national data-base on non-profit organizations. I also inquired about where Narnia students receive the Sacraments, where their volunteer catechetical teachers were trained, and if any of the volunteer teachers and host families were numeraries, supernumeraries or cooperators of Opus Dei? Finally, I formally requested copies of Narnia Clubs' tax returns for 2013, 2014, and 2015 [990 or EZ forms]. IRS disclosure laws mandates that tax-exempt organizations must provide copies of their tax-returns to persons requesting them within a 30-day period.

Opus Dei Dominates Board of Directors

The Narnia Clubs' listing of its Board of Directors reveals the presence of a several high-level Opus Dei Members. Here is a sampling:

Mary Elise Eckman is an Opus Dei numerary. She resides at Alderton House, 117 East 70th Street, in Manhattan, an Opus Dei residence for women. As President of the multi-million dollar Rosemoor Foundation, whose officers and directors are all female numeraries, she oversees "financial support for apostolic initiatives, centers and activities whose origin and mission are inspired by the Catholic Prelature of Opus Dei." In addition to providing grants to Eckman's residence, **Alderton House** which has \$12 million in assets, The Rosemoor Foundation provides financial grants to:

- **Arnold Hall, Inc.**, Mass. – Opened in 1964, it is a Conference Center for religious and educational programs, retreats, and other activities. Total assets over \$2 million.
- **Palm Trail, Inc.**, Florida – With \$1 million plus in assets, the charity helps women shape society.
- **Vancourt, Inc.** – A cultural, educational and religious resource for women.
- **Association for Educational Development, IL** – With \$10 million in assets, engages in supplementary education in areas of character formation, philosophy, and theology.
- **Murray Hill Place, Inc., NY** – With just under \$50 million in assets, the 17-story luxury U.S. headquarters of Opus Dei in the center of Manhattan caters to professionals and university students visiting or living in New York City.
- **The Heights Foundation, Inc., NY** – With over \$5 million in assets, the foundation provides chapels, residences and retreat facilities for Roman Catholic worship, instruction and moral guidance.
- **Corporation for Social and Educational Development** – Founded in 1968, the \$ 4.7 million charity promotes intellectual, moral, cultural and religious development irrespective of race, color, creed, nationality and financial resources. In 2015, it gave grants to the Rosemoor Foundation, Woodlawn Foundation and the Petawa OD Residence in Wis.
- **Trimount Foundation, NY** – Provides chapels, residences and retreat facilities for Roman Catholic worship, instruction and moral guidance. Among its properties is the Frederick Ayer mansion in Boston designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany purchased by the Trimount Foundation and Bayridge Residence and

Cultural Center.

- **Lexington College**, Chicago. Trains women in Hospitality Management. Closed in 2014.
- **Grandeview Study Center** – Opus Dei Women's Residence and Study Center, Pittsburgh, Penn. All officers are numerary/volunteers. Sponsors retreats and Days of Recollection.
- **Longlea Conference Center, Inc.**, Virginia. Provides a chapel and chaplain as well as lodgings and meals for its guests attending retreats and workshops.
- **Clevemont, Inc.** Washington, D.C. – Connected to Yuma Center, provides classes in spirituality and social ethics classes for parents.
- **Yuma Study Center**, Washington, D.C. – Provides leadership programs for girls and women on work and life that "bring fulfillment and freedom." Total assets of \$16 million.
- **Shellbourne, Inc., IN** – With \$7 million in assets, the Shellbourne Conference Center sponsors "traditional, silent retreats, conducted by priests of the Prelature of Opus Dei for either men or women."
- **Wiggins House** – Opus Dei Princeton Women's Cultural Center. All officers/director members are numerary/volunteers.
- **Trumbull Manor, Inc.**, San Francisco. Opus Dei Retreat Center with assets over \$3 million.
- **Roseaire Retreat, Inc.**, Florida – With over \$6 million in assets, the center sponsors educational and charitable activities. Spiritual Direction provided with a lay person or priest.
- **American Initiatives For Social development Foundation**, N.Y.C. – In 2015, this charity provided educational and nutritional funds for Ethiopian women and pre-school children [\$17,050]; basic education and technical assistance for poor women in the Dominican Republic [\$3,948]; and raised money [\$2,505] to expand a vocational training center for girls and women in India.
- **Association for Cultural Interchange (Saxum Project)** – The biggest grant and most interesting grant of \$5,258,860.00 made by the Rosemoor Foundation in 2015 went to the ACI for the Saxum Project in Israel. The \$60 million Conference Center/Multimedia Center/ and Hospitality Training Center, aka OD maid and cleaning training center for local girls, is located on the road between Jerusalem and Emmaus. Its stated purpose is to create "dialogue among people of different religions and cultures," and "highlight the Christian heritage and the Jewish roots of the faith." "The Prelature of Opus Dei will provide for the spiritual needs of those attending Saxum's retreats, workshops, and conferences inspired by the writings of Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer." [Note: Visitors will also receive instruction on the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews as enunciated in Vatican II's "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,"

Nostra Aetate.]

George Sim Johnson III is another of the Narnia Clubs' Directors. The former investment banker is a highly placed Opus Dei operative who sits on the Board of Directors of the **Woodlawn Foundation**, whose assets exceed \$70 million. The Woodlawn Foundation is an Opus Dei holding company which solicits money and provides grants to Opus Dei and its non-profits. In 2014, it gave million-dollar grants to Murry Hill Place, the ACI (Saxum), and Shellbourne. Grants of half-million dollars and down went to about 40 other Opus Dei residences, study centers, private schools and foundations including Roseaire, Heights Foundation, Arnold Hall, Longlea,

Association for Educational Development, Trimount, and Rosemoor, all mentioned above. Opus Dei's Scepter Publishers has printed some of Sim Johnson's writings.

Sim Johnson is a parishioner of the historic **St. Thomas More Church** in Manhattan about nine blocks from Narnia headquarters. Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis was a member of the parish. And a private memorial service for John F. Kennedy, Jr. was conducted there in 1999. The Narnia Club holds many of its sacramental events, receptions and meetings at the parish.

Among the other dozen members of the Narnia Club's Board of Directors are professional women, well-known in their own right, and women married to influential, wealthy New York men in the fields of business, healthcare, banking and finance, wealth management, real estate and the arts. They include Mrs. Thomas Lehrman, a member of the Lehrman family. Lewis E. Lehrman is an investment banker and former candidate for the Governor of New York and a famous convert of Fr. C. John McCloskey, Opus Dei's priest among the rich and famous.

Lawrence Kudlow, the famed economist and pundit is another of McCloskey's successes who was baptized in a small chapel adjacent to St. Thomas More. On February 28, 2017, Kudlow gave a "Faith in Action Talk" titled *A Spiritual Rebirth: An Evening with Larry Kudlow*.

Narnia Clubs Speaker Barbara Falk

Parents whose children are registered for Narnia Clubs' First Communion classes are required to attend special programs usually held at St. Thomas More.

The Narnia Clubs' calendar for October 2017 featured a talk to parents titled "Practical Tips for Raising Children of Character," by Barbara Falk. Who is Ms. Falk? The calendar doesn't say and I don't know if her Opus Dei credentials were given to Narnia Clubs parents at that meeting, but she is well known in Washington D. C's. elite social circles and among EWTN watchers.

Falk is a celibate numerary who joined Opus Dei at the age of 24. From 1990 to 2001, she was the headmistress of Oakcrest School in the Metropolitan area of Washington, D.C., an independent school for girls in grades six to twelve. Since leaving Oakcrest she has become a well-known lecturer in Catholic and conservative circles. Asked to comment on the movie *The Da Vinci Code*, Falk said, "We're [Opus Dei] out to change the world. But we're not shrouded in something weird."

Really?

Transparency Needed for All Opus Dei Apostolates

"Shrouded?" "Weird?" These words bring us to the reason I included the Narnia Clubs in this concluding segment to the Jones/Voris story.

How incredulous is it that the Director of the New York Archdiocesan Catechetical Department did not know that the Narnia Clubs is an Opus Dei cash cow and recruiting operation?

Why is it that the Narnia Catechetical and Cultural Center does not, in any way, publicly and clearly identify itself as an Opus Dei "apostolate." Indeed, as of September 7, 2017, neither the words *Opus Dei* or the *Prelature of Opus Dei* appear anywhere on their website?

The statement that the Narnia Center "operates **under** the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of New York is misleading at best. A more truthful statement would be that the Center operates **in** the Archdiocese of New York,

but is under the control of Opus Dei and not the Archdiocese.

What's with all the secrecy? Why doesn't the Narnia official website clearly carry an up-front statement such as:

WARNING: The Narnia Clubs is an apostolate of Opus Dei. If your child or teenager exhibits strange and unusual behavioral patterns after attending Narnia classes, he or she may be the target of premature, aggressive recruitment tactics. Seek immediate help from competent spiritual and legal sources.

It is an obscenity of the highest degree, especially under the Narnia pre-school and grade-school program, that very young children can be pre-selected as "aspirants" by Opus Dei teachers and their consciences can be systematically deformed without their parents having the slightest clue, since these youngsters are told not to discuss their "vocation" with anyone other than their Opus Dei tutors.

Think I am exaggerating? Think again!

An Opus Dei Life Plan for an Eleven-Year-Old

On October 2, 2017, **Opuslibros.org** carried a story from a very angry mother from Spain whose 11-year-old daughter had been attending an Opus Dei school. The mother states that she and her husband sensed something was not quite right with their young daughter, but didn't have a clue what it was.

Then, at the end of the summer upon the start of a new school term, the mother was carrying her daughter's backpack and chanced to look inside. There were attractive leaflets, one for each month of the year, with pretty, pastel covers picturing Our Lady of Fatima and cute children's faces. Good. Fine.

Upon opening a brochure, the mother saw a curious list of proposed readings and actions for each day – 5 minutes of reading and 5 minutes of talking with God – and "A Life Plan 'Only for the brave'" which included;

- Heroic minute
- Visit to the oratory
- Pray the mysteries of the Rosary
- Make an examination of conscience
- Prayer – Mary's Psalter

There was a chart with boxes marked off by 15- minute intervals with instructions to mark X every time her daughter performed a specific task such as praying the Angelus or studying, or performing an examination of conscience at night..

The mother of this child was a faithful Catholic who took an interest in her daughter's school activities and played an active role in the life of the school. Yet at no time did any teacher or tutor inform the parents of the "Life Plan" Opus Dei had initiated for their daughter. The parents are looking for a new school for their child.

Just maybe some parents who have children in Opus Dei nurseries, and elementary and secondary schools or catechetical classes will want to do the same. Better late than never.

Transparency in Opus Dei Membership

Why, except for designated public OD figures like Fr. John McCloskey, do members of Opus Dei keep their membership a secret, especially when these members have **public** careers such as journalists, politicians, and, yes, catechetical teachers?

Even at a personal level, non-disclosure of Opus Dei membership prostitutes and poisons true friendship between persons. It is a bitter experience to find out that what you believed to be a legitimate caring and loving friendship turns out to be mere systematic, exploitive recruitment tactic which may or may not have panned out.

If the Vatican will not insure the right of the Catholic faithful to full disclosure of Opus Dei's activities, programs and membership, then that duty falls to the Ordinary of the diocese. If both fail to carry out this task with *due diligence*, then faithful Catholics must rise to the challenge.

Opus Dei WATCH

For any reader who is interested in learning more about Opus Dei, I am creating an informal e-mail list called Opus Dei Watch. If you would like to receive periodic news and commentaries on the Prelature of Opus Dei just send you name to me at rvte61@comcast.net.

© Randy Engel

The views expressed by RenewAmerica columnists are their own and do not necessarily reflect the position of RenewAmerica or its affiliates.

(See RenewAmerica's [publishing standards](#).)
